

CHARACTER.

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A VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

TO THE GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

MEMPHIS MEDICAL COLLEGE,

DELIVERED BY

H. V. WOOTEN, M. D.,

Professor of the Principles and Practice of Medicine,

AT THE

ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

FEBRUARY 26th, 1853.

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MEMPHIS:

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1853.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

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PROF. H. V. WOOTEN —

MEDICAL COLLEGE,

FEB. 28, 1853. }

*Dear Sir* — At a meeting of the Graduating Class, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to solicit a copy of your able and interesting VALEDICTORY ADDRESS, delivered at Odd-Fellows' Hall, on the evening of the 26th inst., for publication.

Your ob't serv'ts.

J. M. PHILLIPS, of Tenn.,

OCTAVE ANFAUX, La.,

HAMILTON BRADFORD, Tenn.,

G. H. D. FIELDEN, Texas.

WM. D. SAUNDERS, Arkansas,

J. H. COOK, N. C.

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MEMPHIS, FEB. 28, 1853.

GENTS—Your favor of this date, asking for publication, a copy of the Address which I delivered before you on the evening of the 26th inst., is before me.

I can only reply, that the Address was intended especially for your benefit, and if after the very attentive hearing which you gave it, you think that it can be of any further service to you, it is at your disposal.

Very sincerely,

Your friend & ob't serv'ts,

H. V. WOOTEN.

To MESSRS. JOHN M. PHILLIPS, OCTAVE ANFAUX, HAMILTON BRADFORD, G. H. D. FIELDEN, WM. D. SAUNDERS, J. H. COOK.



## VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

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GENTLEMEN:

In the lives of all men, there are events and circumstances which give direction to their course, form to their character, and which exercise a determining influence upon their destiny ; and you have this evening reached one of these great turning points of life. In receiving the degree of Doctor of Medicine, you have assumed a new position in life, and taken upon yourselves a new character, and a new relation to your fellow men.

This event, has probably long been to you, a subject of pleasing contemplation ; and upon its consummation, the Faculty of our College tender you their sincere congratulations, with their earnest prayers, and highest hopes for the realization of your most cherished anticipations. The pleasing duty of making this tender, has been assigned to me, and in connection with it, you will bear with me, while I shall offer you a few words of sober counsel. To this course we are impelled by the deep interest, and warm personal regard which we entertain for you. You are about to enter upon the duties of a most important, a most comprehensive, and a most responsible profession ; a profession whose duties will exact of you the most untiring mental devotion, and the most enduring labors and privations, for all of which, experience has not yet prepared you.

You are entering this profession in a most interesting epoch of its history. Every where, it is awakened to the importance of raising the standard of learning amongst its members, of elevating its rank, and extending its usefulness. There is

not only an ardent spirit of improvement, working earnestly at every point in the boundary of medical knowledge, and extending it with untiring zeal ; but the polity, and government of the Profession, are receiving a watchful care, which cannot fail to exert an immense influence upon its future progress and destiny. Nor is this spirit of progress limited to our profession. Look around you upon the whole intellectual and physical world, and what a general uprising and forward movement do you behold. Upward and onward to improvement, to usefulness, and to the amelioration and elevation of mankind, is the inspiring sentiment which moves, and guides the spirit of the age every where. And he who is found inactive and listless, will, at best, be distanced in the race, if not borne down, and overwhelmed by the rushing torrent amidst which he stands.

In all the walks of life, action and energy are demanded, but doubly active and diligent must he be, who takes an advance position in the march. Such is the position which you have now taken. Heretofore, you have been *reservoirs*, receiving the knowledge, and the ripe fruits of the labors of others ; but now you are to become *fountains*, from which are to flow out ameliorating knowledge, and good works, to others around you ; and the consummation of the great purposes of your lives, shall be measured by the amount of these which you shall afford. Then, at a point of life so momentous, and sustaining the relation which we do towards you, our feelings of mere personal regard, constrain us to offer you all proper admonition.

But gentlemen, we have another claim upon you, and a further reason for feeling a deep concern for the characters which you are to make and maintain, in future life. Your connection with us as pupils, ceases at this time, and you go forth to the world to act upon your individual responsibilities ; but while like the tendrils of the vine, you may reach far away, and form many and close connections, like the parent stem, your *alma mater*, shall feel the vibrations of your every movement, and participate, to some degree, in every influence that shall affect your character. There is nothing more true, than the divine edict which assigns the fruit as the criterion, by which the tree shall be judged ; and



to nothing is this law more applicable than to institutions like ours.

The city authorities of Memphis, well knowing the value of an institution like this, when based upon high grounds, and conducted upon proper principles, have furnished our College with a building, and all the appropriate conveniences connected therewith, equal to any in our country. The Board of Trustees, actuated by the same high purposes, has not been sparing of energy and circumspection, in organizing the College, and advancing its efficiency and success. Large sums of money, and no small amount of care and labor, have been expended in providing teaching facilities for every branch of instruction in the school, in order that it might be placed upon an equal footing at least, with the older institutions of high character to be found in other cities and States around us. This, we feel warranted in saying, has been accomplished; and as a further evidence of the liberal views, and comprehensive purposes which govern the institution, we may cite you to the fact, that a new Professorship, additional to those usually found in Medical Colleges, has been recently created and filled in this school.

Of the Faculty of the College, it is not our province to speak, further than their objects and purposes are concerned. Their means, their energies, and I may say their destinies, are invested in the institution, and their object is, not its success as a mere business enterprise; but the establishment of an institution of medical learning, which shall come up to the high standard of the present professional era, and maintain a character in consonance with the advancing spirit of the age. It is no part of our purpose to supplant, or rival any of the very reputable Medical Schools of our country, but to place ours upon an equality with the most worthy of them, and to hold our position there, in the onward march of improvement. To this end, the means, and abilities which we can command, and the remnant of our lives are pledged. This we owe to ourselves, to our profession, to the city of Memphis, and to our Alumni.

But with all these endowments, with all these high resolves, and unyielding exertions, there is yet another source of support upon which we must rely for a satisfactory and perma-

nent success. This is the character, *personal*, as well as professional, which shall be sustained by those whom we shall send out into the community, with the honors and guaranties of our College. On this account, we have pointed you to the great interest which we have involved in the success and prosperity of the College,—to the close and sensitive relation which you must continue to sustain towards it—and to the profound feeling of personal regard which we entertain for you; all, that you may correctly appreciate the motives which impel us to give you our parting admonitions concerning the character which you may form, and maintain in society, wherever you may be called to move.

Upon the nature, and amount of medical knowledge which you must possess, and the untiring assiduity which you must observe in order to maintain and improve it, you have had precept enough. Yet, not less important to your success in life, and to everything that concerns your welfare, is the *personal* character which you are to hold amongst your fellow men. This is indeed, a subject upon which too little attention is bestowed, and too little instruction given, in all our institutions of learning, of every class.

A *good character*, is the only sure basis for a successful life. By character, we do not mean the mere reputation, or position which accidental or adventitious circumstances, or a course of conduct founded upon expediency, may give an individual; but the great aggregate of life, based upon fixed and conscientious principles, and made up of deliberate actions therefrom. A man may sometimes acquire a temporary reputation, as fair and bright as a summer's morning, while the intrinsic character which shall mould his life, shall be as dark and forbidding as a winter's night.

Character is not a simple thing, but, in its fullness, must comprehend many elements, or constituent principles, each of which is essential, and must have its proper position, and proportion, in the great aggregate. Then, to examine, and present the subject properly, and to exhibit its nature fully, it will be well to consider these elements, or principles separately. There is the great group of virtues which go to make up what is comprehended in the term *morality*: Amongst these, are the social feelings, or sentiments—a re-



finer sense of our relations to those around us,—a just regard for our duties to our day and generation—and a fostering care for those gentler, and ennobling sentiments and impulses of our nature, which elevate and dignify man, above the passions and practices of mere animal sensuality. A great and cultivated intellect, under the control of an immoral will, is as deadly in its influences upon all that is true, and pure in man, as the exhalations of the famous Upas. Indeed, the most powerful fiends whom Heaven has permitted from time to time, to scourge our earth, have been men of the most gifted, and often, of the most cultivated minds. When we look out upon the vast amount of moral waste, that blots and disfigures the race of man, we often find the dismal picture lighted up—as if to make its deformity more hideous,—by the rays of intellectual splendor which shine forth from its midst, and all around it. We see men, under the light, and in the exercise of the most gifted intellects, pulling down around them all that is good, and noble and true. An immoral public sentiment, as the destroying sirocco, sweeps down, and overwhelms, every monument of intellectual excellence, and blasts even the ground upon which it stood.

To support, in healthful vigor, the moral character, requires that all of its attributes should be, not only introduced, but faithfully nurtured and exercised. Whatever teachers, and parents may have done, there is still, much for every man to do, in the moral education of himself. The idea that knowledge, or intelligence, will give a proper guidance to the will of men, has been proven by all history to be a delusion. Whatever the intelligence may be, if the will, and the sentiments are corrupt, and licentious, the wickedness and misery of the individual will be measured only by the capabilities of his intellect.

But let us examine the individual value of some of these elements of character to which we have alluded. First then; there is one of especial, and paramount importance, because it forms an essential cement, by which all others are held together, and made effective. I refer to that principle which is termed *Integrity*. What shall we be profited by the possession of any of the higher virtues, if we are deficient in the

integrity which is necessary to keep them in unifotm and reliable exercise? The advantages, and beauties of many of the most exalted faculties and virtues of human nature, are too often squandered, and lost, on account of a deficiency in this one. A want of integrity lies at the bottom of most of the vexatious, and injurious delinquencies and disappointments which men so often inflict upon one another. This too, will be found to be the most common source of those heart-burnings of lost confidence, and painful distrusts, which are so often suffered towards those, for many of whose virtues the warmest regard is cherished. The man who habitually fails to fulfil his promises, and discharge his duties and obligations; and who, in short, is deficient in *integrity*, cannot command a sufficient confidence and respect from his fellow-men, to ensure success in any of the public walks of life. This principle makes us faithful and punctual in the discharge of all our duties and obligations, and is absolutely essential to a good character, in every position of life, but more especially so in that of the professional man. When we assume a particular position, or vocation, our pledge to the discharge of all the duties pertaining to it, is as forcive, and imperious as though it were made with a religious affirmation. Integrity is one of the gems in the crown of a good character which cannot be spared without destroying the lustre of the whole.

In the good character, there is a faculty which is difficult to describe, but whose absence is easily detected. It is connected, in some part, with activity, decision, firmness, and perseverance, yet it is not exactly either of them. But it amounts to that which we usually term *Energy*. It is not uncommon to see men of capacious intellect, high morality, and every way well disposed, in all their principles and conduct, and yet who cannot succeed in any thing, their lives amounting to nothing but an illustration of inefficiency. Of such men, we say, "they want *energy*." The natural constitution has something to do, in the formation of this faculty, yet much of its development, and ultimate strength, must depend upon the exercise or training which it receives. It must be made strong enough to act continuously, untiringly, and undiverted; and it must be educated to this, by intelligence, and inflexible moral purpose. As the earth is to an



edifice—the only sure and steadfast foundation for a ponderous and durable superstructure—so is this faculty to character, and success in life, the only safe basis upon which they can rest for power and permanency. By a process of nature, a worm does sometimes become a butterfly; but nothing more; certainly never an eagle. So, a man of vascillating mind, weak in his purposes, and irresolute in his pursuits, may make a beau, possibly a brawler, but surely never an efficient, or a great man. Such an one, though he be the son of a Prince or a Patriarch, if like one of these in olden time, he shall be “weak and unstable as water,” like him, he shall never excel. The young man who can find contentment in the habits of a mere loungeur, an idle time-server, or a debauchee, need promise himself the achievement of nothing that shall be remembered for its value, or that his end shall be lamented for the vacancy which it will make. Energy enables us to contend with the adverse winds of misfortune, and to bear up against the stormy vicissitudes of life. Or if per chance we fall—as all possibly may—with its support, we shall rise again. It will lift us from the quicksands of misfortune, and bear us triumphantly upon the bosom of life’s onward stream. Or in the language of the Psalmist, “though we fall, we shall not be utterly cast down.”

*Prudence*, is the hand-maid of energy. As energy is the hand of accomplishment, so prudence is the head of conception. While energy is the sword of contest, prudence is the shield of safety. Isolated success may, sometimes, be accomplished by rashness. But a successful life, or a single successful purpose, running through different, difficult, or dangerous interferences,—as all great purposes must,—can result only from prudence, in their conception, prosecution, and consummation. Ardent minds, warmed by the hot blood of youth, are prone to look upon prudence as something decidedly cold hearted, if not pusillanimous, in its nature. But no conception can be more erroneous. In all important affairs, cowardice and prudence are antipodes. Not unfrequently the utmost exertion of courage is true prudence, whilst on the other hand, to be quietly prudent, may require the highest degree of courage. It has been wisely said, that “the prudent man foreseeth evil.” He lives not especially for the passing moment, but

by a circumspect foresight, looks at the future, and by its monitions shapes his course. The prudent man is given to deliberation, and the exercise of judgment, in all matters of moment, and to self-possession in all his pursuits. Indeed, prudence is wisdom, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness, and whose paths are paths of peace." It enables us to combine and guide, adjust and govern, all instrumentalities necessary to success. It determines the end fittest to be pursued, and discovers the means best suited to its accomplishment. Prudence determines when to act, and when to cease; when to give and when to receive; when to speak, and when to be silent, and as Robert Hall says, "to regulate the measure of all things, as well as to determine the end, and provide the means of obtaining the end pursued, in every deliberate course of action."

An essential attribute of the good character is *diligence*, or application. Solomon says, "seest thou a man diligent in business, he shall stand before Kings; he shall not stand with mean men;" and the sentence might well be reversed, and made to read, seest thou a man standing with mean men, or associating with idle and dissolute companions, he is not diligent in business, and shall not stand with the good, the wise, and great of the land. There is no rank, or position in life, in our country, to which diligence in business is not a well accredited passport. The saying of the wise man, was literally verified in the history of our Franklin. Diligence in business, lead him from the position of an humble laborer up to that of an ambassador from his government to the court of kings. Whilst, no doubt, many of those who had looked contemptuously upon his early occupation, and perhaps ridiculed his ambition, and sneered at his diligence, were found standing with mean men. Were it possible for a man with the highest intellectual endowments, and moral purposes, to be destitute of diligence, or given to indolence, he never could accomplish anything great. All great, and durable acquisitions, in either the mental or material world, require for their accomplishment, and maintenance, reiterated action. Nature produces gold, but it requires the hand of prudent industry, to fashion it into the cup or coin, which makes its intrinsic value available. It has been well said :



“ Ah ! who can tell how hard it is to climb  
The hill, where fame’s proud temple shines afar.”

In our country, there is no patented prerogative for the formation of character. Honors, to be worn, must be won. It is not uncommon, for the ambitious young man, to aspire to the position, and fame of some great mind, whose brilliant talents and acquirements have thrown lustre upon its race and generation. But in the rapture of his admiration, the tedious and rugged journey of toil and anxiety which that great mind has pursued to its eminent position, is too often overlooked. Let the ambitious aspirant to such position, but try his feet upon the toilsome road by which alone it can be reached, and he will then be made sensible of the value of the attributes which we have mentioned,—*energy, prudence, and diligence*. To “rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness,” have been set down as necessary to the acquisition of pecuniary wealth, and you may feel assured, that they are equally essential, to the accomplishment of any thing in mental or moral greatness. The period from infancy to manhood, consists of many days and years, each of which must uninterruptedly succeed, that you may pass from one of these states to the other. So the road from obscurity to usefulness and renown, consists of many steps, each one of which must be taken, in the ennobling transition. In self denials and sacrifices, in the multitude of thoughts, and the number of actions, in sleepless watchings, and in the labors and fatigues of mind and body, the truly great man, exceeds others, as much, as in the splendor of his acquirements, or the brilliancy of his fame. The volumes of history of such men, contain not as many pages or paragraphs, as their actions, or as many words and letters as their efforts of thought. The solid foundations of their fame, like the coral islands of the Pacific, rest upon regular, and innumerable accretions. True industry is constant, and untiring, and is not a spasmodic effort, but a healthful habit. Its aim is, not only to acquire, but to possess ; not only to possess but to increase. Past success does not satiate, but stimulates ; and having surpassed others in great achievements, the truly diligent man will further strive to surpass himself. He accounts nothing done, while it is imperfect ;

and his relaxation is not idleness, but mere change of employment; all his time being used to some good account. Such men indulge in no indolence, however elegant, in no laziness, however lordly. But their industry is so healthful, that instead of exhausting, it invigorates their powers, and goes untiringly on. As great industry is necessary to the making of great men, and the achievement of great things, so is it, proportionately, to those of less degree. The young man, who, because he has no employment that is perfectly agreeable, or immediately profitable, habituates himself to idleness, will find, that the longer he waits for such employment to come to him, the further it will flee away; until, should the rusts of indolence have left metal enough in his constitution ever to attempt anything useful, the means, and the opportunity, will, in all probability be out of his reach. The incorporation of this principle of industry, or application, as a fixed element of character, is especially important to the young physician. Because, not only are the opportunities, and temptations for its neglect frequently presented to him; but because it is so essential to success in no other profession.

If you should ever find yourselves, in that deplorable condition, of which we sometimes hear, in which you can find nothing to do with either head or hands, let me adjure you, as you regard your future reputation and prosperity, to hide yourselves from the observations of men. For if your characters shall once be stamped with the shame of indolence, they will receive wounds and deep disfigurements, which only years of the most diligent labor can efface. But, in your profession, there is really no such position; it is too comprehensive in its scope; the longest intervals of physical rest which the absence of active employment may afford, will never be more than sufficient for mental preparations for its return. I have dwelt thus upon diligence, or industry, because it is one of the most important elements of character, while it is also one which is most apt to want cultivation.

*Firmness*, or fixedness of purpose, is a principle which should be early adopted, and assiduously cultivated; both because it is of much importance, and also difficult to maintain, and to none is it more important, or difficult, than to



the physician. But the necessity of this principle to the successful *practice* of your *profession*, has been too often urged, to require any repetition. It is as an element of *personal* character that we refer to it here. We commence a pursuit, or enterprise, animated by many motives, which have impelled us to action, and enjoying, in anticipation, the consummation of our purpose. But very soon, our thoughts must turn aside to the details of the task ; we must forget the result, to think of the means of obtaining it. If now our purpose is not fortified by firmness as a principle ; if we do not consider perseverance a duty, independent of the promises of the object of pursuit, we must often lack motive, sufficient to complete what we have laudably begun. There are many persons who have accomplished nothing of importance in a whole life time of active employment ; not because they never did any thing, but because they never finished what they undertook to do. If we abandon a pursuit, or purpose, when it becomes irksome, to resume and prosecute it when it is agreeable, it is lost ; for we are sure to feel an aversion to it ever afterwards. Purposes should be formed under the guidance of prudence, in view of all the difficulties of their accomplishment, as well as the benefits they promise, and when so formed, the duty of firmness in their prosecution, is absolute. Fickleness, and instability do not become the good character ; they can form no part of its composition, and can enter it in no degree, except to disfigure its beauty, and mar its fullness. It is better, and more creditable, to succeed in but one good purpose, than to be the projector of a score of the most laudable, and lofty, without sufficient manly firmness to pursue them to accomplishment. Firmness is an essential bulwark of strength ; with it an acting power proportionately lessened, may be relied upon, while without its support, the most gigantic effort is liable to fall, and to fail. Then,

“ Be firm, one constant element in luck,  
Is genuine, solid, old Teutonic pluck,  
See yon tall shaft ; it felt the earthquake’s thrill,  
Clung to its base, and greets the sun-rise still,  
Stick to your aim ; the mongrels hold will slip,  
But only crow bars loose the Bull-dog’s grip,  
Small as it looks, the jaw that never yields,  
Drags down the bellowing monarch of the fields.”

*Patience*, or forbearance, is an important element of good character. Rashness, impulsive or precipitate action, do not spring from a well ordered, and disciplined mind. Undue hurry for results, overlooks the necessary order of action, and thereby defeats its own purposes. Impatience actually generates unhappiness, and is one of the greatest faults of the age in which we live. We are too impatient of the regular and legitimate order of things, and make ourselves too miserable on account of their delays. But more than this, impatience leads to deception and fraud. Whatever comes out of due time, will also be out of its due place, and thereby fails in meeting the ends for which it was intended. This is a uniform law of human affairs, and a mindfulness of it may save us much disappointment and mortification. Young men who feel conscious that they possess the elements of mind which may enable them to succeed in rising above the mere humdrum of life, in their haste to reach the goal of their ambition, wholly overlook the regular steps of ascent which are necessary to success. They aim alone at the high position, but turn away from the tedious toil, by which alone it can be reached; and when the allotted time for the consummation of their cherished purpose has arrived, instead of finding themselves secure upon the coveted elevation, they are beating their bewildered way around its mirey base. Here, while impatience increases, disappointment and chagrin are added, and hollow pretence and deception, are drawn into requisition, to support a tottering assumption, which can afford nothing but anxiety, and misery. When persons are so anxious for the appearances of acquirements, or possessions, which they have not the patience and energy to gather by real and legitimate means; that they falsely assume them, they doom themselves to a life of misery. Happy is he who early learns to bide his time; not in idleness, but

“To labor, and to wait.”

*Self-reliance*, is another, and to the young particularly, an important element of character. There is no habit which is more important to young men, than that of self-reliance. That bigoted self conceit, which is blind, and deaf, and obdurate to the lessons of wisdom, which the labor and experience of others have developed, is more pernicious and



hateful than the most yielding subserviency, and forms no part of the self-reliance which we commend: While the lights of wisdom should be drawn from every source for the guidance of your feet; still, for the achievement of your purposes, it is to your own action that you should look, and upon your own resources that you should rely. He who habitually relies upon others, and depends upon extraneous aids, and fortuitous circumstances to affect results, which he hopes to enjoy, is leaning upon a broken reed, and acting in conflict with the just laws of reward.

All mankind respect the man who is willing and able to help himself, and all men are the more willing to help or encourage him, because he can be relied upon to help himself. We cannot stigmatise this as selfishness, and complain of it, because it is just, and teaches us a most valuable lesson in the philosophy of human nature,—the necessity of self-dependence. Yes, the world is right upon this point, and its action is based upon a scriptural principle. For, it is said, “to him that hath shall be given, but to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.” Those talents which you shall labor to strengthen and improve, shall be increased, while those which you shall bury in indolence, or suffer to rest in ease, shall be taken away, and you shall become as though you had possessed them not.

When you shall have established a self-relying character, assistance, if offered, can be accepted without a feeling of craven obligation, or beggarly dependence, and with that self respect, which none but the self-relying and independent spirit can enjoy. It may sometimes happen that extraneous aid is of real value, and contributes success; but it is far oftener seen, that assistance from others, proves actually detrimental. Indeed, it most uniformly does, to all but the self-relying for it must cease eventually, and then it is found to have undermined our self-reliance, while it has impaired, if not destroyed our energy, upon which permanent success must depend: Then be resolute and determined in all well chosen purposes, and giants which may oppose you will dwindle into pigmies. You dread to begin a work which your judgment tells you should be accomplished, and while you dread, you shrink and falter. It is mere peevishness; take hold of it

with the hands and heart of a man—once lay hold on it, and it becomes a mere child in your grasp, you will soon toss it about," as the ox tosseth the hay upon his horns."

See a young man, reared wholly upon artificial support; every help and facility furnished to his hands. He may be endowed with a full intellect, and education may have done its polishing work upon it. Give him everything desirable, but the habit and principle of selfreliance, and selfdetermining action, and then put him into the conflicts and competitions of life, and what will he do? What does all observation teach us that he will most probably do? The great probability is, that he will, at best, do nothing desirable. As well take a child that has walked only by its leadings, and put it into a race with the trained hunter of the forest.

The accomplishments of mind which are to the self-relying an armour of strength, are to him, mere tinselled toys which perish without using. Why is it that we see so many men in our country, who have raised themselves to intellectual eminence, wealth, or power, starting from poverty, and dark obscurity, and very often unblest with parental aid? It is because they were early taught in the school of necessity, the lessons of self-reliance. Then cultivate this habit; learn to give yourselves a personal or individual identity, amongst men, which no interested movement, or caprice of others, or any extraneous circumstance can take from you. In setting out upon the great campaign of life, inscribe high upon your banners, yea, upon your hearts, *rely upon thyself*. If you wish to know a thing, learn it; if you want anything done, do it; if you require the use of anything, first make it your own. By thus acting, you will become of stalwart noble growth, and be known and respected amongst men, as those who are the true heads of God's creatures.

An element of character which should be cultivated for its intrinsic value, is *Economy*. Without this, all the high attributes of which we have been speaking, are rendered inoperative, and for all practical purposes, greatly abridged in their value. We must husband our material resources, that we may have the means of exercising those high faculties of character, which if dormant, are for their best purposes, dead. The pursuit and possession of wealth, have in all



ages, been much abused, and perverted, and have thus too often been destructive to virtue and happiness. But the very power which it, in the hands of bad men, exhibits, is but a fair illustration of its availability for good, when wielded by the considerate and just, in the cause of human amelioration.

*Economy* is necessary in all our affairs, and should not be practiced with reference to those which are strictly pecuniary alone. There is an economy of time, and of our physical and mental abilities, which must not be lost sight of. And we would not employ the term here, in its most restricted sense, simply accumulating and hoarding; but it is applicable also, to timely, judicious, and profitable expenditure. There is often more true economy in the outlay of means, than in their gathering, and keeping. If such a thing can be, as a man endowed with all the finer virtues, and generous impulses of character, and yet so profligate of his time, and substance, in expending them upon unworthy objects, as to leave an insufficiency of means to discharge his obligations honorably, and exercise his liberal virtues; instead of these qualities being a source of usefulness and happiness, they are but constant monitors of delinquency and chagrin. Much is usually said in disparagement of worldly wealth, or lucre, and yet it is found, that the highest purposes, and most noble institutions of society, in our day, find in money, their chief means of support, and an essential element of success. Then he who would act the part, and sustain the character of a truly useful and efficient member of society, must engraft into his character, the principle, and habits of a true, and comprehensive economy.

As a principle of life, essential to the maintenance of all the parts and proportions of a good character. *Temperance*, might be conclusively urged; but it surely requires no elucidation, to exhibit the utter absurdity of attempting to sustain in harmony the exalted virtues, which commend themselves to your cultivation, while they are drowned, and brutalized, in sensual indulgences. Indeed, there are many more elementary attributes of character, which add to its beauty, harmony, and efficiency: but our time does not admit of their discussion. We feel however, that enough has been brought forward to engage your attention, and fix your determina-

tion, upon the proper principles, and course of life: And that they offer sufficient promise, and encouragement to ensure their adoption and cultivation.

And moreover, there are guide posts all along your course, which will direct you rightly, if you will walk steadily, and watchfully. Study the characters of those of your seniors, who are distinguished for their wisdom, their goodness, and their success and usefulness in life. Such men are entitled to your highest esteem. Indeed, it should be a principle of life, to be early adopted and constantly cherished, to revere all those, whose objects and offices, are allied to your own—the amelioration of the condition, and the alleviation of the misfortunes of our race. Especially should you entertain, and foster a sensitive regard, for the female character, in which is embodied all the more generous impulses, and exalted virtues of the human heart. A great genius, and acute observer has justly remarked, that he wanted no better index to a corrupt heart, than a tongue which could malign, and asperse the character of woman. In the most anxious hours, and trying scenes through which your professional duties shall lead you: When oppressed with care, sickened at heart, with the complaints of suffering and sorrow, and overwhelmed with fatigue of body and mind, your chief succor and support, will be found in the ever vigilant, benevolent, and sympathetic nature of woman. Then one whose offices by nature, and practice, are so nearly related to the duties of your profession, should surely command your reverential regard.

“The sounds that fall on mortal ear  
As dew drops pure at even,  
That soothe the breast or start the tear,  
Are MOTHER, HOME and HEAVEN.”

Your relations to society, in all its divisions, are to be of the most intimate and confidential character. The weakest foibles, and the sternest virtues of the domestic circle, are to be alike open to your observation, and in this arises a necessity on your part, of maintaining fixed principles, of rectitude, of thought, word, and deed, in all your intercourse with the world around you.

There are many virtues of a negative character, whose observance are of very high importance to the young; but our



counsel touching these, may be comprehended in a single injunction,—remember the force of habit, and shun the very approach of those that are intrinsically evil in their tendencies, or that lead away from the good, as you would shun the atmosphere of the most fatal pestilence.

The elements of character which we have presented for your adoption, and cultivation, have reference to your position as men, and individual members of society; but your relations and duties are now increased, and enlarged. You have become members of a learned, benevolent, and most responsible profession. As individual members of that profession, it devolves upon you to uphold its character, to enlarge its resources, and increase its usefulness. As in the physical system, a lesion, or disorder of any one of the vital organs, deranges the functions, impairs the strength, and jeopardizes the life of the whole body: So in your profession, each individual has his part to act, and the character, usefulness, and destiny of the whole corps, are affected, to a greater or less degree, by the manner of its performance. It is necessary that you should observe an unswerving allegiance to all those duties, and courtesies of conduct which make up what is known as the code of professional ethics.

Whatever allurements may be held out towards a contrary course, from any quarter, you may feel well assured, that without the esteem and confidence of your professional brethren, you cannot acquire, or long sustain those of a virtuous, and intelligent public. Unprofessional, and disreputable conduct, may sometimes offer a temporary facility for gain, but by resorting to such a course, you withdraw yourself from the profession, and descend to one of the lowest of trades, in which you must grovel for gain, without the respect or confidence of even those who yield it.

If medical men are earnest in their claims to rank and respectability as a profession, they should ever remember to support these claims diligently, and faithfully; not by impertinently obtruding them upon those who do not understand, or appreciate them, and whom they concern not; but by exhibiting in their sentiments, and conduct, those regards and courtesies towards their fraternity, which they would claim for it from others. You cannot ask, or expect, the world to

accord to your profession a high consideration, and an abiding confidence, while you are throwing upon its members uncharitable distrusts, and evil repute. It is the imperative duty of every member, to foster, and rigidly practice a system of fraternal courtesy and regard, under which all may meet, and commune, with free and unwary candor, assisting, sustaining, and co-operating with each other. Such a course, can but result in the good will, and increased happiness of the profession, while it enhances its usefulness to mankind, and irresistably challenges the respect and confidence of the world.

There are men, sometimes found in our profession, as well as in others, who are not endowed, either by nature, or education, with an understanding of those civilities, and courtesies of life, which are the cement of society, and the safeguards of a profession. Upon such, no law, or system of ethics, having for their objects, harmony, good will, and improved usefulness, can exert any salutary influence. Feeling and knowing themselves to be inferior to others, and unequal to the higher attributes, and offices of a truly professional life; they are aware that an assumption of such equality, is a falsehood, and must result in a failure. And their only resource is, to fall upon a lower position, where by temporary expedients, and selfish schemes, they may gain a subsistence, the only object known to their grovelling comprehensions. Men who thus abuse their calling, who do not observe or acknowledge the dominion of professional law and usage, and honorably meet their exactions, cannot be made the beneficiaries of their support and protection. With all such, we can have no fraternal connection, but must suffer them to work out alone, their miserable purposes.

It is impossible, on an occasion like the present to even suggest, many of the points of character, both personal and professional, which must engage your attention; but this must be uncalled for, if it were convenient. A just regard for your profession, for science, for humanity, and for yourselves, will ever point you plainly to the path of duty. Your labor is to be incessant, devout, and untiring, for the advancement of science, the elevation of your profession, and the good of your species. Every day, and every place, will pre-



sent to you objects of interest, and means of improvement. And shall you, can you pass them by unheeded? But, the duties of your profession, will furnish appeals to your feelings, in terms more impressive, and arguments more cogent than any which we can employ, to awaken them to a sense of the true nature,—the momentous responsibilities of your vocation. He who takes upon himself the physicians responsibilities, may not, and too often does not appreciate them fully; but if he carries within his bosom the pure impulses of a true man, these are the first lessons which experience will teach him. As you look forward upon the great map of professional labor, which is spread out before you, your contemplations are probably directed chiefly, to the physical fatigue, the privations of rest and refreshment, and the exposures to sun, and storm, which you are to encounter. But ah! these are not the most trying troubles, and highest hardships, through which your duties are to lead you. These are to be met, in that mental anxiety, that terrible torture which your tenderest sensibilities are to endure in your conflicts with disease and death. Night, the most stormy, the most dark and drear, where your physical capabilities for endurance, may be taxed to their utmost capacity, shall often present to your thoughts, a most happy escape from your post of duty, at the bedside of one upon whom your remedies fail, and for whom your hopes falter, if by such exchange, you could but contribute to the comfort, and secure the safety of a dying mortal.

You are to share in the deepest sorrows of your fellow beings, to divide with them the griefs and pains of affliction, and he who fills the physicians office, cannot remain indifferent to its calls, or their demands upon his ceaseless vigilance. The groans of affliction, and the struggles of dying humanity, will pierce the most obdurate moral deafness. The warm gushings of grief from the melting hearts of disconsolate orphanage, will soften and penetrate, the most callous bosom, and the shriek of despair, escaping from the riven heart of widowhood, will startle to a sense of responsibility, the most obtuse and heedless conscience.

You are now upon that stage of life, where the formation of character is inevitable. And it was alone the hope of ren-

dering you some service in this eventful matter, that induced me, under many adverse circumstances, to occupy the place which I have, at this hour. There is no object which I contemplate with such deep interest, and absorbing sympathy, as a young man, going forth to the high duties, privileges, and responsibilities of life. You have reached the forming point in your histories, when the question is to be determined, whether you are to take a position with the good, the wise, and the great, or stand with mean men. Whether the matter enlists your attention or not, your characters will nevertheless form, and your destinies be moulded, for good or evil. We have pointed you to an ascending and toilsome road, and one which is beset on the one hand by a wilderness of trials and difficulties, which will often embarrass, and sometimes threaten to overwhelm you; and on the other, by soothing shades, flowery fields, and singing birds, to tempt you with their promises of ease and pleasure, away from the walks of rectitude and plenty, to starve upon the mere husks of life. Under such circumstances, our sympathies and our hopes are warmly enlisted in your behalf, and we have attempted, in a manner necessarily brief and imperfect, to sketch for your guidance a chart, which may contribute something to your safety and success. We have presented it, in a plain and familiar manner, as to those of our own household, and we offer it to you, as the admonitions of experience, and long observation upon the history of men.

No great end was ever attained without a great aim. Then set the mark of your destinies high, and march energetically, prudently and firmly up to it, and you shall not fail. Indeed, you must listen to no such word as fail. Human life, when extended to its utmost limits, is but a span, and to be successful in the achievement of any great purpose, will admit of no waste or misapplication. But you are, perhaps, told, that it is useless now to enter upon a course of honorable ambition, because your profession is so heavily crowded with competition. It is indeed true, that in numbers, the field of labor is amply supplied. But when was it otherwise? And will you hesitate and falter, on that account? Suppose it was not so. If there were no competition, whence would



triumph derive its glory? The honor of success, is always measured by the magnitude, and difficulty of the enterprise. Look at the hosts of good and useful, and great men, whom you may see, in almost every direction, who have wrought out their own high characters. Did they ever shun competition, or quail before its advances? Did you ever know one of them to wait for an opening? On the contrary, wherever he may spring up, the man who has the legitimate elements of success in his character, will be seen to approach nearer and nearer to the front of the column, and engage more and more heartily, in the strife for honorable advancement. Competition is the true school of efficiency and excellence, and the man who prefers to work without it, is like the school-boy who would study without a teacher. He who has not within himself, those elements of character, which will enable him to succeed, in the midst of competition, would not succeed under any circumstances, even of his own choosing. I speak of legitimate and permanent success.

But there is another matter to be remembered in this connection. Men are mere transitory beings. Those who, by years of assiduous labor, have acquired a reputation, are not to be your competitors; you are to compete with those of your own age, and who start even with you in the race. Older men are before you, but they must have their day, and pass away as the grass of the field. Be not impatient, but wait and labor. Be steadily at the pool, and ready for the troubling of the waters. The men who seem now, to crowd up so completely the avenues to success before you, will soon be ready to resign to you their places. But while waiting for them, you must not, for a moment forget, that when obtained, these places to be held, must be *filled*, not merely *occupied*.

Then with all the toil and tedium of the long course of study through which you have reached the present critical point of life,—with all the embarrassments, and conflicting emotions by which this is attended,—and, with all the varied shades, and prospective coloring of the future, there is much to hope, and much to encourage. Let your aims be upward, and your course onward. Man has but one life upon earth to live; and to throw that one short life away, to make of it

